



Inside this issue:

<i>Green River Lake</i>	1
<i>Aquatic Invasive Species Update</i>	2
<i>East Fork River</i>	3
<i>Variation in Fish Numbers</i>	4
<i>Rainbow Trout in Pinedale</i>	5
<i>2015 Calendar</i>	8

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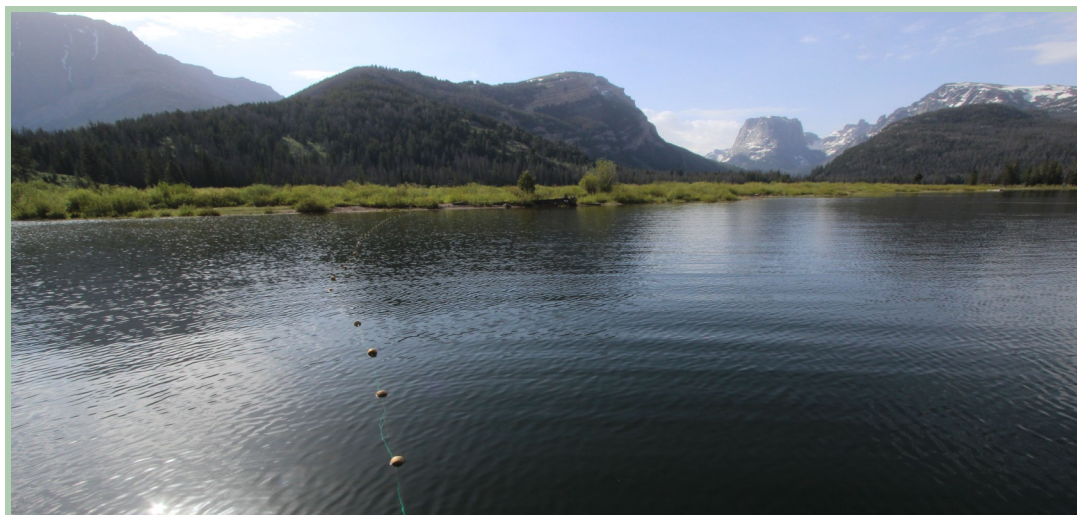
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Aquatic Invasive Species

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Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Pinedale Region Angler Newsletter



Green River Lake: Great Fishing Begins at Civilization's End

Thanks for reading the 2015 version of Pinedale Region Angler Newsletter. This newsletter is intended for everyone interested in the aquatic resources in the Pinedale area. The resources we manage belong to all of us.

The Pinedale Region encompasses the Upper Green River Drainage (upstream of Fontenelle Reservoir) and parts of the Bear River drainage near Cokeville (see map).

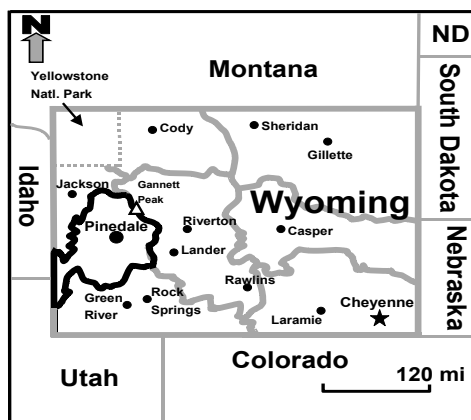
Additional information regarding the Pinedale Region and the areas fisheries can be obtained by contacting the Pinedale Regional Office at (307) 367-4353.

Nestled between rock-covered peaks on the northern end of the Wind River Mountains lies one of the most striking bodies of water in North America. Green River Lake is regarded by many for its dramatic scenery, but equally impressive is what lies beneath the surface of its crystal-clear, alpine water. With the Green River draining nothing but untouched wilderness above and carrying cold water from snow-melt and glaciers through the lake and its free-flowing outlet, the recipe for growing cold-water trout is unmatched.

Lower Green River Lake is located at the edge of civilization, literally. A short drive west of Pinedale will take you to Highway 352, which leads north to the U.S. Forest Service Boundary. From there, the road turns to gravel and becomes USFS Road 650. This scenic route follows the Green River through the historic Kendall Valley and ends at the mouth of Lower Green River Lake. The campground, trailhead, and boat launch site are the last evidence of development you will see if you continue around the lake on foot or horseback, or across it in a boat.

Anglers enjoy year-round opportunity on Lower Green River Lake. Most anglers who

(Continued on page 2)



Pinedale Region Map

(Continued from page 1)

visit the lake will simply fish from shore. Bank anglers are successful throughout the spring and summer, but early summer and fall are usually the best times to target fish from the bank when cooler waters allow for increased activity near the surface and along the shoreline. Rainbow trout are the most frequently caught fish by bank anglers, who can experience average catch rates exceeding one fish an hour through most of the summer thanks in part to annual stocking and some natural reproduction. Lake trout and brook trout are also available from the bank, though later in the summer they tend to move to deeper water and become less active.



Some of the fish in Lower Green River Lake are too large to handle!

Those who wish to fish from a boat can enjoy success throughout the open water season. Early in the summer, boat anglers can encounter lake trout and rainbow trout throughout the lake, regularly reporting limits of fish within a few hours of fishing. As waters warm, lake trout will move to colder, deeper water, offering boat anglers plenty of action near the bottom of the lake along rocky points and drop-offs.

Ice fishing is typically available on Lower Green River Lake from December through April. Though the road to the lake is closed during the winter, skiers and snowmobilers will find easy travel along a groomed trail. Anglers willing to travel to the lake during the winter will enjoy some of the finest fishing around, with lake trout, brook trout, and rainbow trout actively foraging below the ice. Points and drop-offs along the shore and shallow flats near the inlet and outlet are areas most frequently sought by ice anglers seeking a mixed bag of trout.

Year-round angling, spectacular scenery, abundant wildlife, clean water and fresh air... The upper Green River Valley and Lower Green River Lake offer something for everyone. For more information on this or other angling opportunities in the area, call the Regional Office at (307) 367-4353.

- Darren Rhea

Efforts to Combat Aquatic Invasive Species in the Region

As the 2015 watercraft season draws near, we would like to give you an update on what has been happening in the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) program. Check stations remained water side in the Pinedale Region during the 2014 season. Inspectors worked on a rotating basis at our area's boat ramps running inspection sites at Fremont, New Fork, Willow, Boulder, Green River and Halfmoon Lakes. The Pinedale region gained valuable feedback and a high level of boater satisfaction through responses received from the boater appreciation raffle surveys. We are looking forward to another successful season protecting Wyoming waters from the harmful threats of AIS.



Efforts to keep Wyoming free of quagga and zebra mussels will continue in the Pinedale Region in 2015

Training courses to become a Wyoming certified boat inspector will again be available free of charge to the public. Businesses and individuals that wish to become boat inspectors also have the option to be listed on the WGFD website as a certified inspection location. Private businesses and individuals may choose to charge whatever fee they deem appropriate for providing boat inspection services. Training courses are scheduled annually at the Jackson regional office. Interested persons can contact Pinedale AIS specialist Chris Wight to sign up: chris.wight@wyo.gov or (307) 231-7851. Please leave name, mailing address, phone number and email.

During 2014, over 43,000 watercraft inspections were conducted, of which 2,087 were high risk; requiring a more

(Continued on page 6)

The East Fork River

Most Pinedale and Sublette County area fishermen are quite familiar with the New Fork River and the excellent fishing opportunities available along this locally renowned river. However, for those looking to explore less popular waters there are plenty of great places to test your skills and enjoy some very good fishing.

One such place is the East Fork River, an important tributary of the more famous New Fork River. The East Fork River flows under Highway 191 about 3.5 miles south of Boulder and joins the New Fork about 1.5 miles west of there. Most of this river flows through private land so permission from landowners is necessary for access. However, access was recently secured along the river on the Richie easement at the Highway 191 bridge.

Another section open to the public is at the Boulder Rearing Station where the river flows through nearly 1 mile of Wyoming Game and Fish Department property with fishing easements on the adjoining property south of the Department's unit.



A section of the East Fork River before the completion of bank stabilization work

In October 2012 department personnel completed a project to stabilize about 300 feet of bank where the river was threatening to cut into a settling pond at the lower end of this Rearing Station. With the experienced help of a local contractor, a rock "bankfull bench" was constructed along the bank to prevent further erosion and encroachment into the settling pond. Also, three rock deflectors were constructed part way out into the channel to deflect the energy from high flows away from this bank. Willow clumps were incorporated into the rock bench to increase stability, improve aesthetics, and provide overhead cover. In the early summer of 2014 Pinedale Middle School 7th and 8th grade science classes assisted Department personnel with

planting additional willows along this bank to help improve vegetation recovery.



The same area of river shows the completed bank stabilization

Boulder Rearing Station personnel reported that the 300 feet of bank along the East Fork River has remained stable and is continuing to accumulate deposited fine materials on the rock bench. Vegetation that was planted in 2014 has successfully established, and improved habitat for trout now exists in the river.



Local students help plant willows along the East Fork River

For more information about fishing the East Fork or the location of access easements, contact the Pinedale Game and Fish Office at (307) 367-4353 or the Boulder Rearing Station at (307) 537-5439.

- Floyd Roadifer

Fish Numbers Vary Through Time and By Location

Coal Creek is a tributary to the Thomas Fork (also known as Salt Creek) of the Bear River, and is within the historic range of Bonneville cutthroat trout. Other native species in this drainage include mountain whitefish and several species of minnows, suckers, and sculpins. Bonneville cutthroat trout have disappeared from many locations, but they still occupy Coal Creek. Therefore, fish populations have been periodically monitored at several sites along this stream. Two of these sites are separated by less than a quarter of a mile, and the fish communities were sampled five times at each location between 2006 and 2013. A comparison of results from these samples reveals extreme variability that is often seen in fish populations.



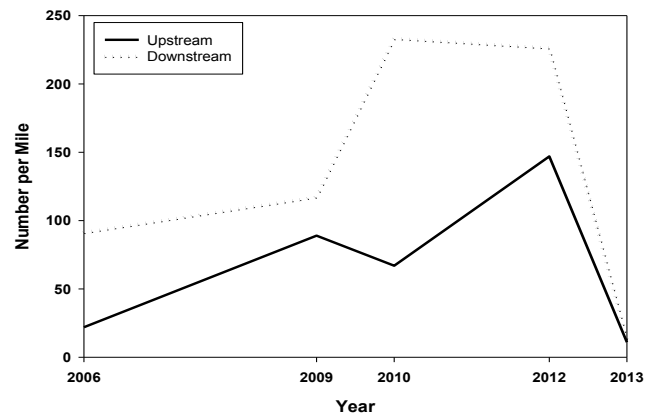
An adult mountain sucker

The sample sites on Coal Creek are similar in many ways, since they are nearly adjacent. Therefore, it would be logical to assume that fish numbers in these two reaches would also be similar. Some people might also expect to see a similar number of fish at each site from year to year. However, neither of those scenarios was true. For example, in 2006, there were about four times more adult cutthroat trout in the lower site than in the upper site. In 2009, the number of adult cutthroat trout increased at both sites. Then, in 2010, the number of adult cutthroat trout doubled at the lower site while the number declined slightly at the upper site. In 2012, it was the upper site that showed a large increase in adult cutthroat trout, while the number at the lower site didn't change much from 2010. Unfortunately, the number of adult cutthroat trout at both sites crashed in 2013.

Native nongame species in Coal Creek also showed big differences between sites and through time. For example, the number of mountain sucker at the lower site was relatively high at the lower site in 2006, but then declined by more than two thirds by 2009. Their numbers stayed low through 2012, but increased in 2013. At the upstream site, mountain sucker numbers fluctuated wildly. The number of mountain suckers followed the same pattern as adult cutthroat trout at this site (both species increased or decreased on a given year), but the magnitude of change was not equal (the num-

ber of one species changed greatly when the other species experienced a small change). However, mountain suckers and adult cutthroat trout followed opposite patterns at the lower site (when one species increased, the other decreased), so it does not seem like interaction between these species was controlling either population.

Bonneville Cutthroat Trout



Population estimates for Bonneville cutthroat trout at two sites on Coal Creek, 2006-2013

While the data presented are specific to Coal Creek, fish populations in many other waters experience similar variability. The number of fish at any location depends on numerous factors, including the quantity and quality of habitat available for all life stages (eggs, juveniles, and adults), competition with other animals for food and space, predation pressure, etc. Each of these factors can change quickly, so their impacts on fish populations can be difficult or impossible to predict with any accuracy. Variability in fish populations can make it challenging to figure out the best places to catch a fish, but overcoming that challenge can be part of the fun for successful anglers.

- Pete Cavalli



An adult Bonneville cutthroat trout

Fishing in Sublette County - Going for the Rainbow

Sublette County is home of some of the best trout fishing in the state. This Green River Valley's waters are surrounded by the Wind River, Wyoming, and Gros Ventre mountain ranges, and the diversity of trout species available is broad. The area provides opportunities to catch brook, rainbow, brown, cutthroat, golden, and lake trout. Nearby lakes and streams also offer grayling and mountain whitefish.

Several waters within Sublette County are stocked annually. This year CCC pond, Pinedale Kids Pond, Little Soda Lake, and Dollar Lake will all be stocked again with rainbow trout. The size of fish stocked in these waters range from 7 inches to over 12 inches for the Kids Pond. Other waters that the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) stocks, but are less well known for their rainbow trout fisheries are the larger Finger Lakes where most anglers target lake trout. However, every year WGFD stocks hundreds of thousands of rainbow trout in these large lakes to provide anglers a diverse fishing opportunity.

Fremont Lake (elevation 7,418 feet) was formed by glacial scouring. Consequently, the lake is very deep (maximum depth >600 feet) with steep sides (mean depth, 271 feet). The extremely oligotrophic, or "nutrient poor" nature of Fremont Lake (TDS, 11-13 mg/l) results from a watershed that is composed primarily of highly insoluble crystalline rock. The lake is located 3.5 miles north of Pinedale and is popular with both resident and nonresident anglers because of easy access. The lake is known for its large lake trout not its rainbow trout fishery. Rainbow trout were first recorded in 1935. Beginning in 1993, catchable rainbow trout (>8 inches) were stocked around the upper campground several times throughout the summer. In the last few years, WGFD has stocked 20,000 catchable rainbow trout at the upper boat ramp or the public sandy beach near Sylvan Bay area. Fish are stocked 3 to 4 times, around the holidays to increase shore-angling opportunities. Though catch rates at Fremont Lake might be slower than the other Finger Lakes, it might be worth the wait (max. length = 21.3 inches, max. weight = 4.00 pounds, WGFD 2011 data)

Halfmoon Lake (elevation, 7,599 feet) is a piedmont lake with a terminal moraine dam formed by glacial scouring. The lake is relatively deep (maximum depth, 282 feet) with steep sides (mean depth, 92 feet). The lake is located 8.25 miles north of Pinedale. The fishery is dominated by medium to small lake trout, which are sustained entirely by natural reproduction and yields high lake trout catch rates. Rainbow trout were first stocked in 1933, have been stocked just about every year since 1948. Nearly 10,000 catchable (>8 inches) rainbow trout are stocked at the boat ramp annually. Rainbow trout provide a unique shore an-

gling opportunity. Typically the rainbow trout fishery is best around the north shoreline, inlet or outlet area. Data collected at Halfmoon Lake in 2013 resulted in rainbow trout ranging from 6.7 to 19.1 inches with a max. weight of 2.2 pounds.

Boulder Lake (elevation, 7,290 feet) was formed by glacial scouring and a terminal moraine dam and is located 15 miles SE of Pinedale. The lake is 1,843 acres and is oligotrophic with a maximum depth of 249 feet and a mean depth of 96 feet. Rainbow trout were first recorded in 1935. WGFD stocks about 20,000 catchable rainbow trout (>8 inches) annually at the boat launch. Boulder Lake is considered one of the best Finger Lakes rainbow trout fisheries. In 2013, WGFD collected rainbow trout with a max length of 24 inches (average ~ 14.0 inches). To protect the spawning rainbow trout fishery, Boulder Creek above the lake is closed to fishing April 1 - June 30.

New Fork Lake (Upper and Lower New Fork lakes) (elevation, 7,819 feet) were formed by glacial scouring and end moraine dams. The Upper Lake has steeper sides and is deeper with a maximum depth of 203 feet. The Lower Lake has a maximum depth of about 140 feet. The mean depth for both lakes combined is reported as 108 ft. The lakes are relatively popular among anglers for lake trout, rainbow trout, and kokanee. Rainbow trout were first stocked in 1937 and have been stocked almost annually since 1942. The lake is now stocked with 10,000 catchables (> 8 inches) annually at the boat ramp. Overall this lake produces a relatively good rainbow trout fishery. Rainbow trout in New Fork Lake average around 14 inches long.

Burnt Lake (elevation, 7,916 feet) consists of two distinct basins, with a shallow basin near the outlet (maximum depth < 70 feet). The maximum depth of 150 feet is found in the basin near the inlet. The lake is located 10 miles east of Pinedale and is accessible by a poor, unimproved road located on U.S Forest Service land. The lake was formed by glacial scouring and an end moraine dam similar to other Finger Lakes. Because of the poor access road to Burnt Lake, the lake receives light fishing pressure. The principal fishery through the years has been for rainbow trout. The first recorded stocking of this species was in 1938. Various numbers and sizes of rainbow trout were stocked almost annually through 1987. Stocking was discontinued, yet gillnet catches remained stable, as natural spawning occurs in Fall Creek near the outlet of Burnt Lake and in the inlet. WGFD sampled the lake in 2014 and found the average size rainbow trout was around 14 inches with a max. length of 17.4 inches.

- Hilda Sexauer

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WE'RE ON THE WEB

<http://wfgd.wyo.gov>

YOU CAN ALSO FIND US ON FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE!



AIS Update

(Continued from page 2)

thorough inspection. This led to 880 boats being decontaminated with hot water to kill and remove all potential AIS. A boat that had last been on mussel infested Lake Havasu in Arizona underwent decontamination at the Pinedale regional office.

Another major component of the AIS Program is sampling waters for the presence of AIS. Plankton tow samples for larval mussels (veligers) were collected at Fremont Lake, Halfmoon Lake, Willow Lake, Soda Lake, Boulder Lake, Burnt Lake, New Fork Lake, Green River Lake and Middle Piney Lake in July and October of 2014. All samples from these waters were negative indicating no presence of mussels.

We would like to remind boaters in the Pinedale Region that zebra and quagga mussels are not the only AIS of concern to our waters. Curly leaf pondweed was sampled in New Fork Lake during the 2012 season. Always remember to Drain, Clean & Dry watercraft and equipment to prevent the spread of this nuisance plant. If you see any suspicious plants or animal on your equipment or notice something while you are enjoying Wyoming's outdoors that you think may be invasive please let us know. You can report a sighting at 1-877-WGFD-AIS or ReportAIS@wyo.gov.

Boaters, don't be shy, come say hello to our friendly inspectors at any of our locations, tell them about your day on the water and get a quick inspection! Thank you for your help in protecting Wyoming waters. From all of us in the AIS program, have a fun and safe 2015 boating season!

- Chris Wight

2015 Calendar of Events

June 6: Kid's Fishing Day

10:00 am - 3:00 pm, CCC Ponds, Pinedale

All kids ages 13 and under are encouraged to attend the annual "Get Hooked on Fishing" event hosted by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, U.S. Forest Service, and Trout Unlimited. There will be a series of short educational activities, free lunch, and the opportunity to catch a variety of trout in CCC Ponds. Youngsters will have the opportunity to learn basic ecology and fish I.D., fishing skills, and gear applications. Some fishing gear and bait is provided, and the event is free to the public.



Children learn valuable angling skills at the annual "Get Hooked on Fishing" event during Kid's Fishing Day at the CCC Ponds

June 6: Wyoming Free Fishing Day

No license or conservation stamp is required to fish during Wyoming's Free Fishing Day. All other rules and regulations apply.

June 13: Partner Appreciation Event

11:00am - 2:00pm, American Legion Park, Pinedale

Meet and interact with members of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and get some hands-on experience with their profession.

July 10 - 12: Pinedale Rendezvous

Meet and interact with members of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department during Rendezvous Days in downtown Pinedale.